COMING TELEGRAM *Department of State* ACTION COPY

SECRET

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OO RUEHC 1967 JUN 28 AM 10 18
DE RUMJIR 29083 1791320
ZNY SSSSS
O P 281245Z JUN 67 ZFF4
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
RUHHHOA/CINCPAC
BT
S E C R E T SAIGON 29083

EXCISE

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A) STATE 217533; B) BANGKOK 16653

1. WE AGREE THAT GVN DENIAL OF BIG MINH'S RIGHT TO RETURN VIOLATES LANGUAGE OF CONSTITUTION AND ELECTORAL LAW. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE SITUATION CAN MOVE VERY FAST IN LIGHT OF MINH'S PRESS CONFERENCE, AND THE SUBSEQUENT INFORMATION CONTAINED REF B. WE UNDERSTAND

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GENERAL LOAN IS STILL IN BANGKOK AND IS NOT EXPECTED TO RETURN BEFORE FRIDAY. WE HAVE AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT HE HAS, DURING HIS ABSENCE, BEEN RELIEVED NOT ONLY OF HIS HIS FUNCTIONS BUT ALSO HIS POLICE AUTHORITY (A TYPICAL VIETNAMESE TRICK). WE ARE TRYING TO CHECK THIS INFORMATION.

2. WE HAVE IT FROM [redacted] THAT GENERALS LA AND LINH QUANG VIEN ARE STILL IN BANGKOK DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY WERE EXPECTED BACK LAST NIGHT. [redacted] REPEATED GENERAL CHIEU'S ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERALS REPORTED IN SAIGON'S 28978 AND SAID THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER MEETINGS ON THIS ISSUE BECAUSE THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE RETURN OF VIEN AND LA.

3. ASKED IF LOAN'S REPORTED ASSISTANCE TO BIG MINH (REF B) MEANS THAT KY FAVORS THE RETURN OF BIG MINH, CONG SAID NO WITH SOME ASSURANCE. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD HIM-

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE [redacted]
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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SELF URGED FOREIGN MINISTER DO TO ORDER THE VIETNAMESE EMBASSY IN BANGKOK TO PERFORM THAT SERVICE FOR BIG MINH SINCE IT COULD NOT LEGALLY BE DENIED TO ANY VIETNAMESE CITIZEN. AN ENTRY PERMIT CAN BE DENIED ON POLITICAL GROUNDS, HOWEVER. ALSO SAID THAT HE UNDERSTANDS BIG MINH'S WIFE WILL ATTEMPT TO FILE FOR HIM TOMORROW. HE BELIEVES SUU WILL RAISE THE MATTER IN THE ASSEMBLY AT THAT TIME.

4. ASKED HOW GENERAL THIEU FEELS ABOUT BIG MINH'S RETURN, SAID THAT THIEU IS UNDECIDED. HE SAID THAT HE HIMSLEF BELIEVES ON BALANCE THAT LETTING BIG MINH RETURN WILL CAUSE LESS TROUBLE THAN BLOCKING HIS RETURN. HE COMMENTED THAT THE MILITANT AN QUANG BUDDHISTS WILL GENERATE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IF BIG MINH IS BARRED FROM RETURNING. AT THE END OF THE CONVERSATION, HE GAVE IT AS HIS OPINION THAT BIG MINH PROBABLY WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN.

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5. MANY POLITICAL FIGURES HERE, PARTICULARLY SOUTHERNERS, ARE ALREADY AWARE OF MINH'S EARLIER EFFORTS TO APPROACH ASSEMBLY CHAIMAN SUU. ONE REPORT IS THAT MINH'S TELEGRAM APPEALING TO SUU WAS NOT DELIVERED TO HIM BY THE PTT BUT THAT IT IS NONETHELESS IN THE HANDS OF CERTAIN SOUTHERN POLITICIANS. MINH'S RETURN AND POSSIBLE CANDIDACY POSE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR MANY OF THE MAJOR CANDIDATES, SINCE HE WOULD PRESUMABLY DRAW BOTH SOTHERN AND MILITARY VOTES. VARIOUS ULTIMATE COMBINATIONS ARE OF COURSE POSSIBLE BUT NONE OF THESE ARE CLEAR AT THIS POINT.

6. WITHOUT MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS OF THIEU, KY AND SOME OF THE OTHER MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE THIS SITUATION FULLY. WE NEED IN PARTICULAR TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BIG MINH'S INTENTIONS AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH LOAN AND WE WILL BE

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ATTEMPTING TO GET FURTHER INFORMATION ON THESE POINTS.

7. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE ON BALANCE THAT WE SHOULD NOT GET INVOLVED IN THIS CONTROVERSY PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY AT THIS STAGE. THE DECISIONS WHICH HAVE TO BE MADE, ALTHOUGH THEY INVOLVE MAJOR FACTORS BEARING ON THE ELECTION AND CANDIDACIES, ARE ONES WHICH MUST BE MADE BY THE GVN. WERE WE TO URGE THEM TO LET BIG MINH COME BACK, THEY COULD LEGITIMATELY CLAIM THAT WE WERE SUPPORTING HIM AS OUR CANDIDATE AND INTERVENING IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS SETTING OURSELVES UP AS JUDGE ON THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. FINALLY, TO INTERVENE WOULD EMBROIL US IN ALL THE PERMUTATIONS OF THIS PROBLEM AND IN THE END MIGHT NOT BE EFFECTIVE IN ANY CASE. OUR FAILURE TO TAKE A POSITION ON THE MATTER CAN OF COURSE BE INTERPRETED AS THE REVERSE, BUT IT SEEMS TO US THAT AT THIS STAGE THIS IS POTENTIALLY FAR LESS DAMAGING.

BUNKER

ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O 6/28/67, 10:26 A.M.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE 6/28/67, 10:42 A.M.

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